


*April 2009 Edition*



# Student Music Dictionary

definitions • abbreviations  
*by* ShopSheetMusic.com

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- I** The major “one” chord. The first diatonic chord of the major scale.
- ii** The minor “two” chord. The second diatonic chord of the major scale.
- iii** The minor “three” chord. The third diatonic chord of the major scale.
- IV** The major “four” chord. The second diatonic chord of the major scale.
- V** The major “five” chord. The fifth diatonic chord of the major scale.
- V7** The major “five-seven” chord. The fifth diatonic chord of the major scale with an added seventh.
- vi** The minor “six” chord. The sixth diatonic chord of the major scale.
- vii°** The diminished “seven” chord. The seventh diatonic chord of the
- 2/4** A standard time signature. The two means each measure should get two beats. The four means a quarter note should get the beat.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century** The European musical period 1900-1999. (See also, *Appendix 1 – Musical Periods.*)
- 3/4** A standard time signature. The three means each measure should get three beats. The four means a quarter note should get the beat.
- 4/4** A standard time signature. The first (top) four means each measure should get four beats. The second (bottom) means a quarter note should get the beat. 4/4 time is also called *common time*.
- 6/8** A standard time signature. The first (top) four means each measure should get four beats. The second (bottom) means a quarter note should get the beat.
- 8va** When placed above the staff, *8va* means then notes below it should be played an octave higher than written. When below the staff the notes should be played an octave lower than written.
- 8vb** Means the notes above should be played an octave lower than written.

## A

- a** At, by, for, with.
- A** 1.) The sixth note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with A as the keynote. 3.) The first section of a multi-part form.
- A440** The note A at 440 Hz. Concert standard tuning.
- a cappella** Without accompaniment.
- a piacere** At the discretion of the performer.  
*Rubato.*
- a tempo** Return to the original rate of speed.
- a tonal** Not in a definite key.
- accelerando** Quickening.
- accent** Play with emphasis.
- accidentals** Sharps, flats and natural signs used to raise or lower the pitch of a note.
- accompaniment** A supporting musical part.
- ad lib** See *ad libitum*.
- ad libitum** At liberty. Left to the performer.
- adagietto** Slightly faster than *adagio*.
- adagio** Slowly.
- adagissimo** Extremely slowly.
- Aeolian**
- afflitto** Sad, melancholy.
- affettuoso** Tenderly.
- affrettando** Hurrying.
- agitato** In a restless manner.
- air** A melody without words.
- Alberti bass** A left hand accompaniment for the piano in which broken chords are played bottom, top, middle, top. Named for Domenico Alberti.
- al** 1.) To the. 2.) In the style of.
- al fine** Play to the word *Fine*.
- al niente** Dying to nothing.
- alla** According to; like a.
- alla breve** According to the breve. Cut time.
- allargando** Broadening and slowing.
- allegretto** Quickly, but slower than *allegro*.
- allegro** Quickly.
- allemande** A German dance.
- alto** 1.) A low female singing voice. 2.) The second part in a 4-part hymn or chorale.
- amoroso** Lovingly.
- andante** Walking tempo.
- andantino** Slightly faster than *andante*.
- anima** See *animato*.
- animato** Animated, lively.
- appassionato** Passionately.
- appoggiatura** An small ornamental note usually above the melody note.
- arco** Played with the bow. (See also, *pizzicato*.)
- arpeggio** Notes of a chord are played one after the other rather than together.
- assai** Very.
- atonal** Music in which all pitches are equally important.
- attacca** Beging the next section immediately, without pause.

**augmented** Made larger. As in intervals, chords or phrases.

## B

**B** 1.) The seventh note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with B as the keynote. 3.) The second section of a multi-part form.

**bagatelle** A light composition, often for piano.

**bar** Measure.

**bar line** A horizontal line on the staff used to mark measures.

**barre** In guitar playing, fretting all of the strings with one finger.

**baritone** A male singing voice with a range between a tenor and a bass.

**baroque** “extravagant, flamboyant” The European musical period 1600-1760. (See also, *Appendix 1 – Musical Periods.*)

**bass** 1.) A low male singing voice. 2.) The lowest part in a 4-part hymn or chorale.

**basso** Bass.

**beat** The pulse of a piece of music.

**ben** Well; Good.

**binary** Two part.

**binary form** A-B form.

**bis** Repeat the marked passage.

**blue note** 1.) A lowered 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 7<sup>th</sup> scale step. 2.) A note bent lower by a microtone.

**blues scale** A form of the minor scale that also includes the tritone. The C blues scale is made of C, E♭, F, F#, G, B♭, C. (See also, *major blues scale.*)

**bourrée** A French dance in two.

**bpm** An abbreviation for *beats pre minute*. An indication of the speed of a piece.

**brace** A curved bracket used to connect multiple staves.

**bravo** An exclamation of appreciation.

**bravura** Great technical ability and flair.

**breit** Broad and slow.

**breve** Half note.

**broken chord** A figure in which chord tones are played one after another rather than together.

**brillante** Brilliant, sparkling.

**brio** Vigor, spirit.

**buffo** In a comic style.

## C

**C** 1.) The first note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with C as the keynote. 3.) The third section of a multi-part form.

**cadenza** An (often improvised) ending.

**calando** Becoming softer.

**calcando** Increasing in tempo.

**calmato** Calm, quite.

**canon** A type of counterpoint that employs restatements of the original melody. Often the later voices are versions of the original played backward (retrograde), upside down (inverse) or at a different tempo.

**cantabile** As singing. Flowing.

**cantando** Singing style.

**cantata** A vocal and instrumental composition usually with several movements.

**cantilena** Song.

**capo** A movable clamp for transposing a guitar or other fretted instrument.

**capriccio** A lively, often technical, free-form instrumental piece.

**caprice** Another term for *capriccio*.

**chaconne** A set of variations on a repeated chord progression.

**chamber music** Music for a small group usually

**chromatic** 1.) Proceeding by half steps. 2.) Containing notes outside the diatonic scale.

**chromatic scale** A scale ascending or descending by half steps.

**chorale** A hymn of the Lutheran church.

**chord** (See Major Chord and Minor Chord.)

**chord progression**

**church modes**

**Classical** The European musical period 1730-1820. (See also, *Appendix 1 – Musical Periods.*)

**clef** The symbol used at the beginning of the staff to indicate which lines and spaces represent which notes. (See also, *bass clef* and *treble clef.*)

**col** With.

**coll** With.

**colla** With; with the.

**colla parte** Perform freely.

**colla voce** Perform freely.

**come prima, come primo**

**come sopra** Same as above.

**comodo** Comfortable.

**comp** Accompany.

**con** With.

**consonant** Harmonious and pleasing.

**coda** An ending. (See also, *D. C. al Coda* and *D. S. al Coda*.)

**coda sign**

**codetta** 1.) A linking passage. 2.) A small coda. (See also, *coda*.)

**common time** 4/4 time.

**comodo** A comfortably fast tempo.

**concert pitch** The actual pitch sounded by a transposing instrument.

**concertante**

**concertino**

**concerto** A work for soloist and orchestra with three contrasting movements.

**contra** Low, under.

**contrary motion** In opposite directions.

**corda** String.

**counterpoint** A musical style in which several independent musical lines sound simultaneously.

**courante** A French dance in three.

**crescendo** Gradually louder. (See also, *decrescendo*.)

**crotchet** A flag.

**cut time** 2/2 time. Count "one" for each half note.

## D

**D** 1.) The second note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with D as the keynote.

**D. C.** See *da capo*.

**D. C. al Fine** Repeat from the beginning, stopping at the *Fine*.

**D. S.** Abbreviation for *dal segno*.

**D. S. al Coda** Return to the D. S. sign and then take the coda.

**D. S. al Fine** Return to the D. S. sign, stopping at the *Fine*.

**da capo** The top. Return to the beginning.

**dal segno** "from the sign" Return to the D. S. symbol.

**damper** Felt blocks that stop the ringing of the strings on a piano.

**damper pedal** The right pedal. Pressing it raises the dampers and allows the strings to ring freely.

**deceptive cadence** A dominant chord followed by a chord other than the tonic.

**decrescendo** Gradually softer. (See *diminuendo* and *crescendo*.)

**degree** A scale tone as numbered beginning with tonic as "one."

**di** Of, with, to.

**diatonic** 1.) Naturally occurring within a given key. 2.) Anything based on the major scale, the minor scale or the church modes.

**dim.** Abbreviation of *diminuendo*.

**dimin.** Abbreviation of *diminuendo*.

**diminished** Made smaller. Chords, intervals, or phrases can be diminished.

**diminished chord** A chord made of a root, a minor third, and a diminished fifth.

**diminished fifth** The interval from the root to the flatted fifth. From C to G $\flat$ , for example.

**diminuendo** Gradually softer. See *decrescendo*.

**dissonant** Unpleasant, clashing.

**div.** Divisi.

**divisi** A direction to divide a section into separate parts.

**dolce** Sweetly.

**dolcissimo** Very sweetly.

**dolente** Sorrowfully, mournfully.

**doloroso** Plaintive, mournful.

**dominant** The fifth scale degree or the chord built on that note.

**doppio** Double.

**doppo movimento** Play twice as fast.

**dot** 1.) A dot placed after a note adds half the notes value to the note. 2.) A dot placed above a note indicates *staccato*.

**double flat** A symbol that lowers the pitch of a note by two half steps.

**double sharp** A symbol that raises the pitch of a note by two half steps.

**droite** Right.

**drone** A continuously sounded note.

**duet** A composition to be performed by two musicians.

**dur** Major.

## E

**e** And.

**E** 1.) The third note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with E as the keynote.

**eighth note** A note with a value of 1/2 count in 4/4 time.

**elegy** A funeral song.

**elision** The overlapping of phrases.

**en pressant** Hurrying.

**en retenant** Gradually slower.  
**encore** An extra piece at the end of a program.  
**energico** Energetically, with energy.  
**enharmonic** Notes that are spelled differently but sound the same (C# and D♭).  
**espr.** Abbreviation for *espressivo*.  
**espress.** Abbreviation for *espressivo*.  
**espressivo** Expressively.  
**etude** A piece to improve technique.  
**etwas** Somewhat.  
**espressione** Expression.  
**exposition** The first statement of a theme.

## F

**F** 1.) The fourth note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with F as the keynote.  
**f** Abbreviation for *forte*.  
**ff** Abbreviation for *fortissimo*.  
**fff** Abbreviation for *fortississimo*.  
**ffff** Abbreviation for *fortissississimo*.  
**f clef** The bass clef.  
**facile** In a light, effortless style.  
**fermata** A sign indicating that the notes longer or under the sign be held longer.  
**finale** The final movement or ending.  
**Fine** End.  
**flag** A symbol added to the stem of a note that halves the value of that note.  
**flat** A symbol that lowers the pitch of a note by a half-step.  
**four-four time**  
**forte** Loud. Abbreviated *f*.  
**fortepiano** 1.) The keyboard instrument that became the modern piano. 2.) A dynamic mark indicating a loud attack followed by an immediate reduction in volume.  
**fortissimo** Very loud. Abbreviated *ff*.  
**fortississimo** Very, very loud. Abbreviated *fff*.  
**fortissississimo** Very, very, very loud. Abbreviated *ffff*.  
**forza** Perform robustly.  
**forzando** Perform with emphasis.  
**free** Unstructured.  
**frequency** Vibrations per second.  
**fugato** In the style of a fugue.  
**fugue** A compositional form built on distinct voices that weave together to form a musical tapestry.  
**fundamental** 1.) The main pitch. 2.) The pitch on which a chord is built.  
**fuoco** Perform with fervor.

**furioso** Perform furiously.

## G

**G** 1.) The fifth note of the C major scale. 2.) A scale with G as the keynote.  
**G. P.** Abbreviation for *generalpause*.  
**galante** In a bold, elegant style.  
**galliard** Merry dance in triple meter.  
**gauche** Left.  
**gavotte** A dance in 2 often with a drone.  
**generalpause** A note that the performer should wait for moment before going on. (Abbreviated *G. P.*)  
**grand pause** A *generalpause*.  
**gigue** A lively English dance. Often in 6/8 time.  
**giocoso** Perform merrily.  
**giojoso** Joyous.  
**giusto** Perform evenly.  
**glissando** Sliding from one note to another. Usually referring to an instrumental performance. (See also, *portamento*.)  
**grace note** A short note used to embellish a melody.  
**grandioso** Grandly, majestically.  
**grave** Very, very slowly.  
**grazia** Grace.  
**grazioso** Gracefully, elegant.  
**ground bass** A short bass line repeated throughout a piece.

## H

**H** The letter used in Germany for the note B natural.  
**half note** A note with a value of 2 counts in 4/4 time.  
**half rest** A rest with a value of 2 counts in 4/4 time.  
**half step** In western music, the distance from any note to the next nearest note. Also called a *minor second*.  
**harmonic motion** The speed at which the chords change.  
**harmony** Pitches sounded together to produce chords.  
**hertz** Pitch as expressed in cycles per second.  
**humoresque** A humorous instrumental piece.  
**hymn** A song of praise often arranged for four vocal parts.  
**Hz** An abbreviation of *hertz*.

**I**

**-issimo** A suffix indicating “to a greater degree” or “very.”

**immer** Always.

**impetuoso** Fervent.

**in two** Musical pulse felt in groups of two beats, as in 2/4 time.

**in three** Musical pulse felt in groups of three beats, as in 3/4 time.

**in four** Musical pulse felt in groups of four beats, as in 4/4 time.

**incalzando** Pressing.

**inquieto** Restless, agitated.

**interval** The distance between notes. Measured as a half step, whole step, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> etc.

**intonation** Accuracy of pitch.

**inverse** Played with opposite intervals. As in, down a fourth instead of up a fourth.

**inversion** A chord in which a note other than the root is the lowest sounding pitch.

**J**

**jig** A lively dance.

**K**

**key** The scale on which a piece is based. It is shown by the key signature.

**keynote** Tonic.

**key signature** The sharps or flats at the beginning of a piece showing the scale on which the piece is based.

**L**

**L. H.** Left hand.

**L. P.** Long pause.

**l'istesso tempo** Keep the same speed. An indication that the pulse remains the same even though the meter changes.

**lamentoso** Lamentable, mournful.

**languendo** Grow faint, dying away.

**largamente** Broad, full.

**largo** Rather slowly.

**largo** Very slowly.

**leading tone** The seventh scale step of the major scale.

**legato** Smoothly connect. See *slur*.

**ledger lines** Short lines used to extend the range of the staff.

**legatissimo** Very smoothly connected.

**legato** Smoothly connected.

**leggiero** Delicately.

**lent** Slow.

**lento** Slowly, though faster than *largo*.

**lesto** Lively, quickly.

**lied** Song.

**lieder** Songs.

**lieder ohne worte** Song without words.

**lilting** A rhythmic swing.

**loco** As written.

**lyre** An attachment to hold sheet music.

**lyric** 1.) The words of a song. 2.) A light, bright soprano voice.

**M**

**M. D.** Abbreviation for *main droite*. Right hand.

**M. G.** Abbreviation for *main gauche*. Left hand.

**M. M.** “Mälzel’s Metronome” for Johann Nepomuk Mälzel, the inventor of the metronome. Now understood to indicate “metronome marking.”

**ma** But.

**maestoso** Majestically, dignified.

**main** Hand.

**major blues scale** A major version of the blues scale. The C major blues scale is made of C, D, D#, E, G, A, C. (See also, *major blues scale*.)

**major scale** A scale with the pattern W, W, H, W, W, W, H (W=Whole Step, H=Half Step). C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, for example.

**major chord** A chord based on scale steps 1, 3 and 5 of a major scale. (See *Appendix 2 – Chord Symbols*.)

**major key** A major scale.

**mancando** Decreasing volume, dying away.

**mano** The hand.

**mano destra** Right hand.

**mano sinistra** Left hand.

**marcato** Stressed.

**march** A style of music in 4/4 time originally written for military bands.

**marcia** March.

**mazurka** A Polish national dance.

**measure** A group of beats separated on the staff by bar lines.

**Medieval** The European musical period 476-1400. (See also, *Appendix I – Musical Periods.*)

**menuet** See *minuet*.

**meno** Less.

**meno mosso** Less motion. Slower.

**mesto** Sad.

**metronome** A device that keeps a steady beat. Metronomes identify the tempo in beats per minute.

**mezza voce** In a restrained manner.

**mezzo forte** Moderately loud.

**mezzo piano** Moderately quiet.

**mf** Abbreviation for *mezzo forte*.

**microtone** An interval smaller than a half step.

**middle C** The note on one ledger line between the treble and bass clefs.

**minor**

**minor scale** (See also *relative minor, natural minor, harmonic minor* and *melodic minor*.)

**minuet** A classical era dance in 3/4 time.

**misterioso** Mysterious.

**misura** 1.) Bar, measure. 2.) In strict time.

**mit** With.

**mm** or **MM** See M. M.

**modal** Music based on a *mode* rather than a being strongly diatonic and often with less harmonic motion than other types of music.

**mode** See *church modes*.

**moderato** Moderately.

**moll** Minor.

**molto** Much.

**mordent** An ornament that consists of principle note, lower note, principle note.

**morendo** Dying away.

**mosso** Motion.

**motive** The smallest self-contained musical idea. A motive can be as small as two notes.

**moto** Motion.

**movement** A self-contained section of a larger work.

**mp** Abbreviation for *mezzo piano*.

**M. S.** Abbreviation for *mano sinistra*.

**musette** A French dance in cut time.

**muta** Change.

## N

**N. C.** No chord.

**natural sign** A symbol placed before a note to cancel an earlier sharp or flat.

**nicht** Not.

**no chord** A note indicating that a melody should be played without accompaniment.

**nobilmente** Noble.

**non** Not.

**note** A written musical symbol.

**notehead** The round part of a note.

**notation** The symbols used to represent pitches and rhythms.

## O

**obligato** An instrumental part distinct from the melody and

**octave** 12 half-steps. The distance from any note to the next higher or lower of the same name.

**octave sign** Play eight notes higher than written.

**opera** 1.) A musical drama in one of more acts. 2.) Plural of *opus*.

**Op.** Opus.

**Opp.** Plural of *opus*.

**opus** A number assigned to a work as a classification.

**opuses** Plural of *opus*.

**oratorio** An opera-like performance, but without scenery, costumes, and acting.

**ossia** Or. An alternate form of a passage.

**ostinato** A repeated musical pattern.

## P

**p** Abbreviation for *piano*.

**pp** Abbreviation for *pianissimo*.

**ppp** Abbreviation for *pianississimo*.

**pppp** Abbreviation for *pianissississimo*.

**parallel keys** Major and minor keys that share the same tonic.

**parallel motion** Moving in the same direction.

**parlando** Singing is a speaking style.

**partita** A suite.

**passacaglia** A form of variation written over a continuous bass pattern and in triple meter.

**passepied** A Baroque dance.

**pastoral** Representing rural life.

**patetico** Pathetic.

**pavan** A slow, stately dance.

**Ped.** An instruction to use the damper pedal.

**pedal** A mechanism operated with the feet.

**pedal tone** A repeated or sustained note.

**perdendosi** Dying away by getting gradually slower and quieter.

**pesante** Heavy.

**phrase** A complete musical thought. Phrases are often four or eight bars.

**phrasing** Interpretation. The musical shape.

**pianissimo** Very quiet. Abbreviated *pp*.

**pianississimo** Very, very quiet. Abbreviated *ppp*.

**pianissississimo** Very, very, very quiet. Abbreviated *pppp*.

**piano** Quiet. Abbreviated *p*.

**pianoforte** 1.) The keyboard instrument that became the modern piano. 2.) A dynamic mark indicating a quiet attack followed by an immediate increase in volume.

**pitch** The highness or lowness of a note.

**pizz.** Pizzicato.

**pizzicato** Plucked with the fingers. (See also, *arco*.)

**più** More.

**plus** More.

**poco** Little.

**poco a poco** Little by little.

**polytonal** Using two or more keys at the same time.

**portamento** Sliding from one note to another. Usually referring to a vocal performance. (See also, *glissando*.)

**ponticello** The bridge.

**portato** Carried. An articulation between staccato and legato.

**prelude** An instrumental piece often intended as an introduction of a larger work.

**presto** Fast.

**prestissimo** Very fast.

**prima volta** First time.

**primo** The first, or main part. The upper party in a piano duet.

**pue** Little.

## Q

**quarter note** A note with a value of 1 count in 4/4 time.

**quarter rest** A rest with a value of 1 count in 4/4 time.

**quasi** In the style of.

**quaver** Eighth note.

**quieto** Calm, peaceful.

## R

**R. H.** Right hand.

**rall.** Abbreviation for *rallentando*.

**rallentando** Becoming slower.

**recapitulation** The return of the main theme after a section of development or other material.

**recitative** A spoken song used to advance the story in an opera or oratorio.

**relative keys** Major and minor keys that share the same key signature.

**Renaissance** The European musical period 1400-1600. (See also, *Appendix 1 – Musical Periods*.)

**repeat** A symbol noting that a section of music should be played again.

**replica** Repeat.

**reprise** 1.) A repeated section. 2.) A short ending song taken from earlier in a show or concert.

**requiem** A composition to honor the dead.

**rest** A symbol indicating that a note is omitted.

**retrograde** Played backward.

**reveille** A wake-up call for bugle.

**rf** Rinforzato.

**rfz** Rinforzando.

**rhapsody** A free composition.

**rhythm** A beat pattern.

**ribattuta** A trill in an uneven, dotted rhythm.

**ricercare** A prelude, often very free in nature.

**riff** A repeated music pattern.

**rigaudon** A French dance in duple meter.

**rigore** Strict attention to the composer's wishes.

**rinforzando** Accent.

**rinforzato** Accent.

**rip.** Abbreviation of *ripieno*.

**ripieno** Played by the whole orchestra.

**riposo** Calm, tranquil.

**risoluto** Resolutely. Determinedly.

**rit.** Ritardando.

**ritard.** Ritardando.

**ritardando** Gradually slowing.

**riten.** Ritenuto.

**ritenuto** Hold back, more suddenly than ritardando.

**ritornello** A reoccurring instrumental section.

**Romantic** The European musical period 1815-1910. (See also, *Appendix 1 – Musical Periods*.)

**romanza** Romance. A song without words.

**root** The *tonic* or note on which a chord is built.

**root position** A chord in which the tonic is the lowest sounding note.

**round** A simple type of canon where voices enter at different times singing the same melody.

**rubato** Not in strict time.

## S

**S. P.** Abbreviation for *sostenuto pedal*.

**sarabande** A dance in triple meter. Often with the rhythm: quarter note, half note.

**SATB** A four-part vocal arrangement for soprano, alto, tenor and bass.

**scale** An arrangement of notes in a specific pattern of whole and half steps.

**scherzo** Joke.

**scherzando** Joking.

**schnell** Quickly.

**schneller** Quicker.

**sciolto** Light, free.

**sec** Dry, unornamented. Non legato.

**seconda volta** Second time.

**secondo** The second part.

**sehr** Very.

**segue** 1.) Continuing in the same way. 2.) Without stopping.

**semplíce** A direction to play in a simple, plain way.

**sempre** Always.

**senza** Without.

**senaz cedere**

**senza misura**

**senza sordini**

**sequence** The repetition of a musical idea at a different pitch.

**serial** A method of composition in which a set of tones are played in a chosen order without regard to traditional harmony.

**seventh**

**sixteenth note** A note with a value of 1/4 counts in 4/4 time.

**sf**

**sforzando** A sudden accent. Notated *sfz*.

**sforzato**

*sfz* Sforzando.

**sharp** A symbol that raises the pitch of a note by a half-step.

**simile** An indication to continue in the same way.

**sinistra** Left.

**skip** Any interval larger than a whole step.

**slargando** Slow gradually.

**slur** A curved line connecting two or more notes of different pitches indicating legato performance.

**smorzando** Fading.

**soave** Gently, softly.

**soft pedal** The left piano pedal. Pressing it creates a gentler sound.

**solí** Performed by an entire section rather than a solo.

**solmization** The assigning of syllables to the various pitches. (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do is a major scale.)

**solo** A single performer.

**sonata** An instrumental, rather than vocal, piece.

**sonata da camera** Chamber sonata.

**sonata da chiesa** Church sonata.

**sonatina** A piece shorter and less technical than a sonata

**sopra** Over. Cross hands over.

**soprano** 1.) A high female singing voice. 2.) The top part in a 4-part hymn or chorale.

**sordino** Mute.

**sospirando** Subdued, sighing.

**sostenuto** Sustained.

**sotto** Below, under.

**sotto voce** Half voice. Quietly.

**spendendosi** Fading away.

**spianato** Even, smooth.

**spiccato** Detached, separated.

**spirito** Spirit, energy.

**spiritoso** With spirit, animated.

**staccatissimo** More detached than staccato.

**stacc.** Staccato.

**staccato** Indicates a note be played with detached phrasing, indicated by a dot over or under the note.

**staff** A set of five lines on which musical notation is made.

**stave** A *staff*.

**stem** A vertical line attached to a notehead.

**stentando** Holding back.

**step** The distance from one scale degree to the very next. A second.

**stop** A lever on an organ that controls

**strepitoso** Noisy, animated..

**stringendo** Pressing forward, accelerating.

**subito** Suddenly.

**suite** A set of dances.

**sul** At, on, over.

**sus** Abbreviation for a suspended chord. (See also, *Appendix 2 – Chord Symbols*.)

**suspended chord** A chord in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> is replaced by the 4<sup>th</sup> or sometimes the 2<sup>nd</sup>. (See also, *Appendix 2 – Chord Symbols*.)

**suspension** When a note is held while the harmony changes so it then becomes dissonant. The dissonant note then moves to become consonant again.

**symphony** 1.) A composition for orchestra. 2.) An orchestra.

**syncopation** A shifting of the accent to a weak beat.

**system** Two or more staves joined by a brace.

## T

**tacet** Be silent. A direction to stop playing.

**tanto** So much.

**tarantella** A fast dance in 6/8 time.

**tempo** The speed of a piece.

**tempo I** Return to the original rate of speed.

**tempo giusto** Perform in strict time.

**tempo primo** Return to the original tempo.

**ten.** Abbreviation for *tenuto*.

**teneramente** Tenderly.

**tenerezza** Tenderly.

**tenor** 1.) A high male singing voice. 2.) The second lowest part in a 4-part hymn or chorale.

**tenuto** To hold a note for its full value. Emphasize slightly.

**ternary** A three part form with the structure A - B - A.

**tessitura** The range in which the majority of notes happen in a given piece.

**tetrachord** Four notes with the pattern whole step, whole step, half step.

**theme** The first or main melody of a piece.

**theme and variations** A composition in which a melody is modified with each new presentation.

**three-four time** See *3/4*.

**tie** A curved line connecting two or more notes of the same pitch. The values of tied notes are added together.

**timbre** The character of a sound (as opposed to the volume or pitch).

**time** 1.) The rhythmic pattern of a piece of music. 2.) In correct tempo.

**time signature** An indication of rhythm at the beginning of a piece. The upper number gives the number of beats per measure while the lower shows the type of note getting the beat.

**toccata** A piece meant to show off a performer's technique.

**toccatina** A small toccata.

**tonal** Music based on major or minor scales.

**tonal center** The note of most importance in a scale.

**tonality** The western system of organizing pitches into major and minor scales around a center (*tonic*).

**tone poem** A piece that suggests a scene or mood.

**tonic** The first scale degree or the chord built on that note. The *tonal center*.

**tosto** Swiftly, rapidly.

**tranquillo** Tranquil, quiet.

**transpose** To move a series of notes by an constant interval. For example, C-E-G transposed up a major second becomes B $\flat$  - D-F.

**transposing instrument** An instrument whose actual pitch is different from the pitch notated and played.

**traurig** Sad, mournful.

**tre corde** Release the soft pedal.

**trem.** Tremolo.

**tremolo** A rapid repetition of the same note.

**triad** A three-note chord build in thirds. (See also, *Appendix 2 – Chord Symbols*.)

**trill** A rapid alternation between a given note and note a second above.

**triple meter** Having three beats to a measure.

**triplet** The division of one or two beats into three.

**tritone** The even division of the octave. The distance from C to F $\sharp$ .

**trois** Three.

**troppo** Too much. Moderately.

**turn** An ornament consisting of the notes above, on, below and back to the main note.

**tutti** All voices or instruments together.

**twelve-tone** A compositional process treating all tones equally without a tonic.

## U

**un** A.

**una corda** The soft pedal.

**unis.** Unison.

**unison** The same pitch.

**upbeat** The last beat of a measure.

## V

**V. S.** Volti subito.

**valse** Waltz.

**variation** A modification of a previously stated melody. See *theme*.

**veloce** Very quickly.

**verse** A group of lines in a song making up a unit. Often a single song contains several verses all with the same rhyme and rhythmic scheme.

**vibrato** A rapid variation in the pitch of a note.

**vif** Lively.

**vigoroso** With emphasis, spirit.

**vite** Quickly.

**vivace** Lively. A fast tempo.

**vivacissimo** Lively, brisk.

**vivo** Lively.

**voca** Voice.

**vocal** With the voice.

**vocalize** A vocal exercise without words.

**voce** Voice.

**voice** 1.) Sound created by the human vocal folds. 2.) A single, distinct melodic line.

**volta** Time. See *prima volta* and *seconda volta*.

**volti** To turn.

**volti subito** Turn the page quickly.

**voluntary** An composition for organ to be performed in a church service.

## W

**waltz** A dance with 3 beats per measure.

**walzer** Waltz.

**wenig** Little.

**whole note** A note with a value of 4 counts in 4/4 time.

**whole rest** A rest with a value of 4 counts in 4/4 time.

**whole step** The interval of two half steps.

**whole tone** The interval of a *whole step*.

**whole-tone scale** A scale made entirely of whole steps. The C major whole tone scale is C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C.

## Z

**zart** Perform tenderly.

**zu** Indicates the number of musicians to play a unison part.

## Appendix 1 - Musical Periods

Medieval	476-1400
Renaissance	1400-1600
Baroque	1600-1760
Classical	1730-1820
Romantic	1815-1910
20 <sup>th</sup> Century	1900-1999

## Appendix 2 – Chord Symbols

CHORD SYMBOL	CHORD TYPE	SCALE STEPS
C	Major	1, 3, 5
Cm, Cmin, C-	Minor	1, b3, 5
C+, Caug	Augmented	1, 3, #5
C°, Cdim	Diminished	1, 3, b5
CM7, CMaj7	Major seventh	1, 3, 5, 7
C7	Dominant seventh	1, 3, 5, b7
Cm7	Minor seventh	1, b3, 5, b7
Cø, Cø7	Half-diminished seventh	1, b3, b5, b7
C°7	Fully-diminished seventh	1, b3, b5, bb7
Cm(Maj7)	Minor-major seventh	1, b3, 5, 7
Csus, Csus4	Suspended 4th	1, 4, 5
C2	Two	1, 2, 5
C add2, C add9	Add two, add nine	1, 2, 3, 5
C5, C no 3rd	No third	1, 5
C6	Six	1, 3, 5, 6
C6/9	Six-nine	1, 3, 5, 6, 9
C9	Dominant ninth	1, 3, 5, b7, 9
CMaj9	Major ninth	1, 3, 5, 7, 9
11	Eleventh	1, 3, 5, b7, 9, 11
13	Thirteenth	1, 3, 5, b7, 9, 11, 13

### ADDITIONAL MODIFYING SYMBOLS

b, -	Lower the note given by a half step.
#, +	Raise the note given by a half step.
Add	Add the given scale step.
N. C.	No chord.
/	C/G. C is the chord. G is the bass note.

## Appendix 3 – Internet Links

For more in-depth definitions, or for entries that go beyond the scope of this Student Music Dictionary visit some the sites listed below. The music.vt.edu site lets you hear the pronunciation of each word.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_terms)  
<http://www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary/>  
<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Category:Music>